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PSYCHO POLITICS

Nick Land - August 11, 2017 -

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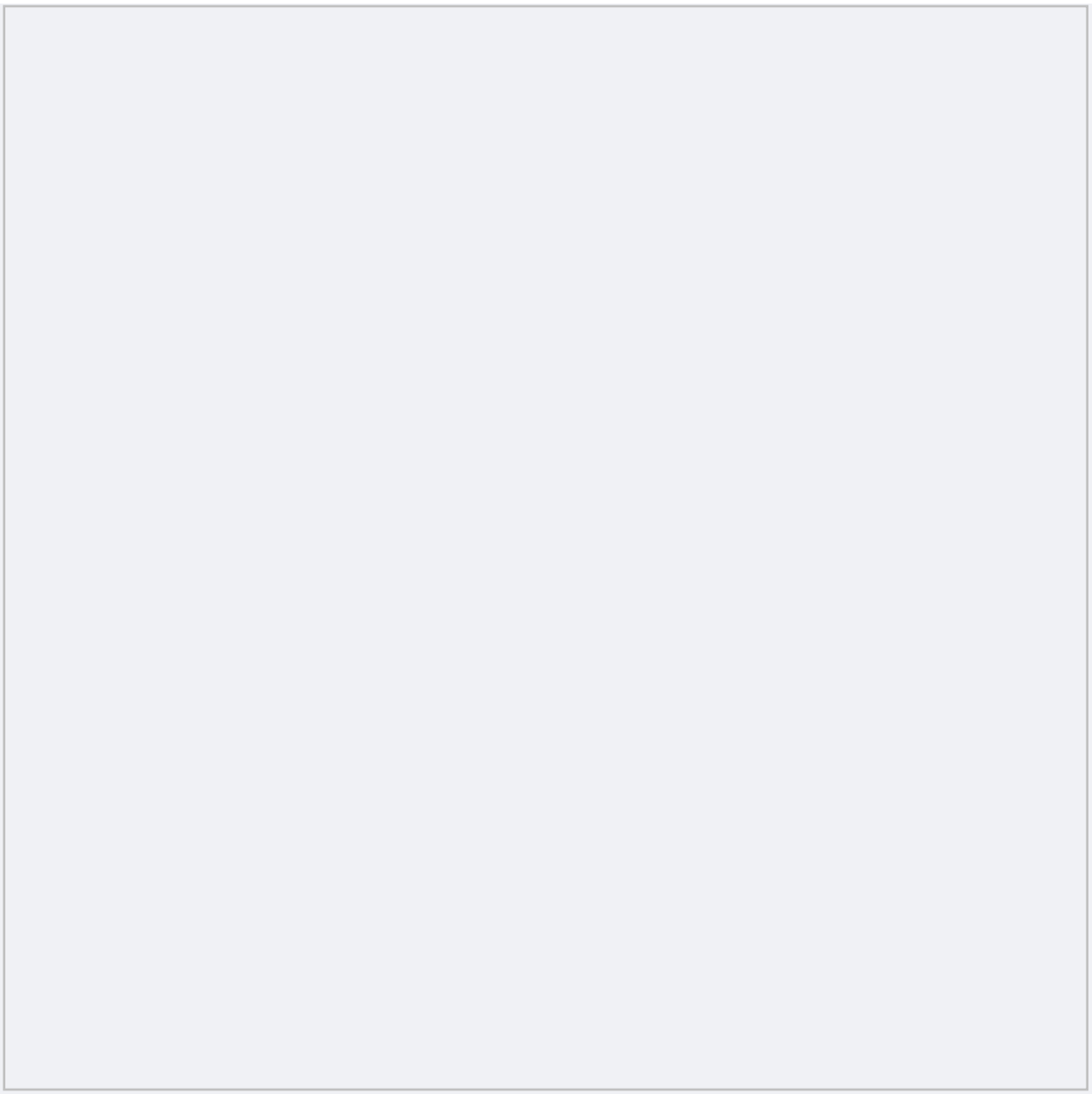

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Classical liberals are sitting-out the end of the world. Sitting out, mostly, in the way Norma Bates sat out her son's exploration of psychological diversity. Norman would know why she's not moving, if he could only remember.

Before even starting, we're deep into the identity problem, and actually several. 'Liberalism' is the most profoundly corrupted word in political history. Without any exaggeration, rhetorical license, or metaphorical latitude, it's the leathery sliced-off face of something murdered long ago which now serves to disguise a foaming chainsaw-wielding maniac sharing none of its DNA. That psycho-killer usage needs to be put to rest before even getting to Bates. *Liberalism*, from this point forward, means nothing at all like state-happy progressivism. It is defined, instead, as the polar opposite of socialism. Its sole commanding value is liberty. It is

individualist, only ever guardedly traditionalist, commercially and industrially oriented, strategically neglectful of *care*, skeptical in respect to all purported public agencies, and rigorously economical in respect to every dimension of government. It had a truly terrible 20th century, and right now things aren't looking any better.

At no time in recent history have liberal concerns been less relevant to public policy – even as foils, or 'neoliberal' bogeymen. It might be necessary to return to the 1930s to find a time of comparable eclipse. They aren't being listened to, and they certainly aren't the *object* of any animated conversations, unless to slip into social media banter as the butt of jokes. Their concerns seem eccentric, and even identifiably *dated*, to some point between the end of the 1970s and the Baby Bush quagmire. Where the right once nursed a secret ambivalence for Pinochet, out of admiration for the Chicago Boys, today it's only interested in the helicopters.

It isn't – mostly – the gender and generational confusion of the Norma / Norman sub-personalities that make libertarians so Batesian. It's the third alter, who goes missing in the movie but not in the novel. Norman intermittently mistakes himself for *Normal*. Normal is the one who thinks he's just like everyone else. Liberalism does exactly the same thing. It goes mad by thinking of itself as normal, when really it's WEIRD.

Liberal universalism has aged badly in recent years. More specifically, it has aged badly in two very different directions. To the left, liberalism has been consumed by universalism, becoming a liberty-deriding globalist monster, while to the right it has been thoroughly demoralized, as recognition has dawned about what its universalism actually means. To anyone still trembling to some slight residual death-flutter of the liberal impulse, the discussion quickly becomes nearly intolerable at this point. Withdrawal, psychic-shattering, and other manifestations of traumatized craziness ensue.

Everything that the 2016 US Presidential Election was about is germane. Political correctness and the Overton Window in general, race, immigration, gender, and social *norms* in particular, every part of it caught upon an aspect of the liberal agony. Donald Trump was, in the strict sense – and not just the depraved one – a drastically *illiberal* candidate. In his campaign, public humiliation of universalism amounted almost to a platform. American politics had become nakedly tribal.

That American dream girl who you were talking to over dinner? The one who might have been the future? She bled-out from multiple knife-wounds in the shower. *You killed her, Norman*. Yes, you did. It's hard to believe, obviously, but we're going to explain how.

To begin with the most heated dimension of identity politics, liberalism has a race problem. Liberals tend to like immigrants a lot, while immigrants don't like liberals very much at all. Some quantitative evidence for this is provided by Hal Pashler, in a (2013) paper on *U.S.*

Immigrants' Attitudes Toward Libertarian Values, which discovers:

> *... a marked pattern of **lower** support for pro-liberty views among immigrants as compared to US-born residents. These differences were generally statistically significant and sizable, with a few scattered exceptions. With increasing proportions of the US population being foreign-born, low support for libertarian values by foreign-born residents means that the political prospects of libertarian values in the US are likely to diminish over time.*

According to a wide range of metrics, foreign-born residents expressed significantly lower support for limited government than the native-born population. Such effects would almost certainly been strengthened further if the latter category had itself been broken-down by ethnicity. When Americans were offered a binary choice between smaller or larger government, an expansion of government was favored by only 27% of Whites, but by 55% of Asians, 64% of Blacks, and 73% of Hispanics. More precise ethnic categories only sharpen the pattern. The Hajnal Line, which divides Europe's most committed (north-western) out-breeders from their more tribalistic neighbors, summarizes a gradient of individualism, among other distinctive liberal traits. Emmanuel Todd's ethnography of family types and their associated ideological tendencies binds liberalism to the (North-West European) 'Absolute Nuclear Family.' Common law traditions are peculiar to Anglo-Saxons. Weber and Sombart ethnically identify capitalist dispositions with Protestants and (modern) Jews. It begins to seem extremely unlikely that liberals would represent a random sample of the world's peoples.

Liberal gender-skew is scarcely less striking.

Did Women's Suffrage Change the Size and Scope of Government? ask John Lott and Lawrence Kenny. It certainly looks that way:

> *We find that government continued to grow as female voter turnout increased over time. Since suffrage was granted to women in different states over a long period of time extending from 1869 to 1920, it is unlikely that World War I is the key. These data also allow us to address causality questions in unusual ways. The central issue is whether giving women the right to vote caused government to grow or there was something else that both contributed to women's getting the right to vote and also increased government growth. We find very similar effects of women's suffrage in states that voted for suffrage and states that were forced to give women the right to vote, which suggests that the second effect is small.*

The era of big government and that of female emancipation don't seem to be easily distinguishable. In the incautious words of Peter Thiel:

> *Since 1920, the vast increase in welfare beneficiaries and the extension of the franchise to women — two constituencies that are notoriously tough for libertarians — have rendered the notion of "capitalist democracy" into an oxymoron.*

The hideously compelling but utterly illiberal conclusion seems to be that women and non-whites have used their rising political influence to massively expand the scope of government. To which a third factor can be added, which is marriage. Quite simply, singles are communist maniacs, comparatively speaking. In regard to US partisan politics, Steve Sailer calls it 'the marriage gap.' It isn't small. In the 2012 Presidential Election, married *women* (in general) broke for Romney over Obama by 55%, married white women by 63%, and married white men by 67%. (Romney's share among black single women was 2%.)

As liberal demographic, political, and social policies have been entrenched, classical liberals, steering the course of modern social evolution from a position modestly to the left of the old monarchical and ecclesiastical establishment, eventually became libertarians, railing ineffectually against the plunge into socialist tyranny from the position of a stranded, alienated, and derided outer right. Throughout the whole of this process, liberalism has consisted – almost without exception – of white men. These have typically been white men in denial, admittedly. Across the entire sweep of world history there has never been a population group more neglectful of its own privileges. And thus they destroyed themselves.

Anyone who has reached the "Oh, my God, the stereotypes!" stage with this is onto something. That has been a central part of the learning process. All the stereotypes are true (basically). That's science, too, if it helps, though it rarely does. Unless inflated, or dogmatized, beyond the range of usefulness as broad epistemological heuristics, stereotypes have vastly greater reliability than – for instance – ideologically-motivated cognitive commitments. What's more, classical liberals used to know that. It's a Burkean expectation.

Stereotypes are spontaneous social products, like natural languages, common law, and metallic money. To say all this explains why classical liberals are conservatives, characterized by a principled acceptance of *the way things have turned out*. What had been, historically, a reasonably sanguine view of centralized state government was based on how little of it there had ever been. The mere existence of the gargantuan social-democratic welfarist state makes such conservative liberalism (or liberal conservatism) impossible. Radically frustrated

revolutionary libertarianism takes its place.

It's easy to see what pushes Bates over the edge. He'd thought he was *Normal*, but it turns out he's a WASP. By a further mad twist, he recognizes the one thing WASPs will never do is defend their own culture – that's an essential ethnic tradition. Libertarianism has been crazily WASPish that way, when he looks at it, which he can't for long. It's an intractable paradox that leads through incoherence into fragmentation. To have protected his identity would have been something only another could have done. Perhaps his mother would look after him? But she's dead.

The identification of classical liberalism with WASP culture is a strong approximation. Few socio-historical correlations are more robust, but the coincidence can only be statistical. There are socialist WASPs, and classical liberal non-WASPs, although not enough of either to seriously disrupt the pattern. When the French, in particular, refer to Anglo-Saxons stereotypically, they know what they are talking about, and so does anybody else who is paying attention. Hubert Védrine puts it best:

> *[L]et's admit it: Globalization does not automatically benefit France. […] Globalization develops according to principles that correspond neither to French tradition nor to French culture. These principles include the ultraliberal market economy, mistrust of the state, individualism removed from the republican tradition, the inevitable reinforcement of the universal and 'indispensable' role of the United States, common law, the English language, Anglo-Saxon norms, and Protestant — more than Catholic — concepts.*

It all makes sense from outside, but for WASP culture itself – which is to say *for liberalism* – identity politics is madness. That leaves it with nowhere to go. The leather-face schizo-Maoism of the contemporary Anglophone left is not any kind of plausible option, but neither is anything opening up on the popular right. As the Alt-Right consolidates its passionate affair with identity, it sounds ever more like Hubert Védrine. Individualism is derided. Its suspicion of free-trade owes more to Friedrich List than to the Scottish Enlightenment. Its criticism of labor arbitrage is often almost indistinguishable from that familiar from socialist traditions, marked by the same current of moral outrage at the fact that Capital – despite itself being competitively disciplined by footloose consumers – is permitted to shop around for its human resources. Wage competition, and even price competition more generally, is an increasingly common object of attack. At its dynamic, racial edge the Alt-Right promotes solidarity among *Whites*, or *Europeans*, as if either could ever be a WASP thing. *Europe* is what liberalism has always sought to escape. Populism demands grievance politics, which means default antipathy

to market dominant minorities, and thus – in the Western context – an irrepressible inclination to anti-Semitism. None of this describes a place that even maddened liberals can go.

Because the word 'fascism' has been so ruined by incontinent polemical usage, it is difficult to employ without apparent rhetorical over-reach. This is unfortunate, because in its cold, technical sense, the word is not even merely convenient, but even invaluable. It literally means *the politics of bundling*. *Fasces* are sticks bound together. Liberals are essentially defined by their dissent from that. If WASP culture has a core, it is loose association. There's no real possibility of simply sticking it back together. Pirates and cowboys don't do national solidarity. That would be a different culture altogether.

As for Bates, he knows his mother is dead by now, and even that he killed her – *kills anyone like her*. Bad thoughts flood in. It's difficult to move on, but at least he has confidence in his own inviolable non-aggression principle. There's no way it could have been as they say, because he wouldn't hurt anyone. Not even a fly.

Nick land is an independent writer living in Shanghai.

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